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LETTER DATED 20 JULY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

An open debate on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants in a peacekeeping environment at the Security Council meeting on 8 July 1999 highlighted the practical value of permanently adapting the United Nations modus operandi in peacekeeping and peace-building to the challenges of the conflict situations around the world.

In this context the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, merits particular attention: the continued availability of large amounts of armaments to the Abkhaz separatists has unleashed incidents of violence against the returnees. Since the deployment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peacekeeping operation in the zone of conflict, these incidents have already claimed the lives of 1,500 people, thus displaying a consistent pattern of progressing ethnic cleansing. The implications of continued weapons smuggling into Abkhazia became increasingly self-evident with the outbreak of hostilities in Gali district in May 1998, which resulted into a new outflow of displaced persons from the region.

From 1993 up to now there have been numerous facts of illegal shipments of armaments to Abkhazia. At present, the Abkhaz separatists are in possession of more than 124 units of heavy weaponry as well as military aircraft, attack helicopters and military vessels. Suffice it to state that the increasing amounts of unregistered armaments have contributed to the emergence of a situation that poses a threat to the treaty regime of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) and the security and stability of the whole region. The alarming trend is maintained in contravention of paragraph 8 of Security Council resolution 876 (1993) on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, in which the Council "calls on all States to prevent the provision from their territories or by persons under their jurisdiction of all assistance, other than humanitarian assistance, to the Abkhaz side and in particular to prevent the supply of any weapons and munitions". By the same token, the supply of weaponry constitutes a flagrant violation of the decisions of the CIS heads of State of 19 January 1996.

Given this premise, we fully support the commitment expressed by the members of the Security Council that all nations which export arms and light

weapons, or which are involved in the traffic flow of these weapons, bear responsibility and that there is a need for concerted actions to curb arms transfers to zones of conflict.

In this respect, we do believe that the statement of the President of the Security Council of 8 July 1999 (see S/PRST/1999/21) offers sound ground, inter alia, for bringing the strict implementation of Security Council resolution 876 (1993) into the focus of the forthcoming Security Council discussion on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia. Empowering the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) to monitor arms transfers to Abkhazia could be one of the aspects of reinvigorating the process of the conflict settlement, which has been at an impasse for too long.

Being conscious of the international dimension of the illegal flow of armaments, Georgia stands ready to contribute to the multilateral efforts and to cooperate in negotiating effective instruments to this end, in particular, a global convention on illicit arms trafficking.

May I ask your kind assistance in having the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Peter CHKHEIDZE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative